

Neeper Conservation Area

Ten-Year Area Management Plan FY 2015-2024




Wildlife Division Chief


Date

Neeper Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

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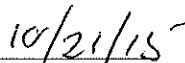
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NORTHEAST REGION

RCT Chair



Signature



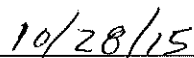
Date

WILDLIFE DIVISION

Unit Chief



Signature



Date

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Neeper Conservation Area, #6128
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1961
- **Acreage:** 227 acres
- **County:** Clark
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Statements of Purpose:**
 - A. Strategic Direction**

Neeper Conservation Area (CA) contains a diversity of natural communities and species. Management of the area is focused on encouraging healthy populations of turkey, deer and associated non-game species, while conserving and enhancing water quality, upland forests and diverse natural communities; and offering the public compatible outdoor recreational opportunities.
 - B. Desired Future Conditions**

The desired future condition of Neeper CA is an area containing quality upland forests and woodlands; healthy natural communities; and stable wooded stream corridors that increase water quality and provide public use opportunities.
 - C. Federal Aid Statement**

N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

- I. Special Considerations**
 - A. Priority Areas:** None
 - B. Natural Areas:** None
- II. Important Natural Features and Resources**
 - A. Species of Conservation Concern:** None observed.
 - B. Caves:** None
 - C. Springs:** None
- III. Existing Infrastructure**
 - 2 parking lots
 - 1 fishless pond (0.2 acres) with limited boat access

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

- A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:** None
- B. Federal Interest:** Federal funds may be used in the management of this land. Fish and wildlife agencies may not allow recreational activities and related facilities that would interfere with the purpose for which the State is managing the land. Other uses may be acceptable and must be assessed in each specific situation.
- C. Easements:** A power line easement crosses the area.
- D. Cultural Resources Findings:** No known cultural resources.
- E. Hazards and Hazardous Materials:** None observed.
- F. Endangered Species:** None observed.
- G. Boundary Issues:** None

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Management of upland and bottomland forest and woodland communities provides an opportunity to demonstrate sound and sustainable management.
- 2) Demonstrate, communicate and educate the public about best management practices (e.g., timber harvests, prescribed burns) used to manage the forests and woodlands on Neeper CA.
- 3) The small fertile open land portions of Neeper CA provide good sites for wildlife foodplots. Cropping on the area supplements natural food supplies and benefits wildlife by providing food and cover and by setting back succession. Idle areas attract ground-nesting birds and other wildlife, resulting in more hunting and viewing opportunities for area users.
- 4) Control exotic or invasive plant species.

Management Objective 1: Improve the health of forest and woodland communities to benefit wildlife and increase diversity of natural communities.

Strategy 1: Conduct timber stand improvement and woodland thinning projects as necessary. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Conduct a timber sale. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Conduct post-harvest forest stand improvement. (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Educate area users about the benefits of healthy forest and woodland management.

Strategy 1: Post “Healthy Woods” signs adjacent to actively managed forest and woodland areas. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Post general information on Missouri Atlas Database, e.g., when and where to expect active forest and woodland management. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Post educational information on bulletin boards, e.g., why active forest and woodland management benefit conservation areas. (Forestry)

Management Objective 3: Provide food and cover for wildlife, and maintain early successional vegetation.

Strategy 1: Plant approximately 5 acres of food plots annually using area staff. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Manage old fields to combat invading woody plants and to encourage native grass and forbs. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 4: Reduce invasion of exotic species.

Strategy 1: Reduce fescue, autumn olive, and garlic mustard coverage by increasing spraying activity. (Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Clean mower decks so invasive species are not moved around the area or to other conservation areas. (Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Monitor for other invasive species and treat them if/when they appear. (Wildlife)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Establish or maintain forested riparian corridors along the three first-order Wyaconda River tributaries that flow through Neeper CA.
- 2) Maintain the 0.2-acre pond on Neeper CA. It serves as a wildlife watering site and important habitat for amphibians and reptiles.

Management Objective 1: Establish or maintain a forested corridor along all streams on the area.

Strategy 1: Maintain a forested corridor through natural regeneration or planting. A minimum 100 feet should be maintained, where not limited by area boundary or utility easement. (Forestry, Wildlife)

Strategy 2: Inspect riparian corridors along all agricultural fields every three years to determine the need for field adjustments. (Wildlife)

Strategy 3: Follow the *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines for Lands and Waters Managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2009) for all management activities. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Provide suitable habitat for amphibians and reptiles in the pond with no fisheries management potential.

Strategy 1: Maintain fishless pond for amphibians and reptiles. (Fisheries)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Provide hunting opportunities for the public. Hunting is one of the main reasons many people visit the area in the fall. Spring and fall turkey seasons also attract hunters to the area with good numbers of turkeys present. Small-game hunting opportunities exist for squirrels, quail and rabbits.
- 2) Provide picnicking and camping opportunities for the public. Primitive camping is permitted in two graveled parking areas with grassy adjacent areas. Pack-in camping is allowed anytime except during firearms deer and turkey seasons. No amenities are provided.

Management Objective 1: Provide hunting opportunities for squirrels, deer and turkeys. Manage for a variety of small-game species where appropriate habitat exists.

Strategy 1: Manage the area's diverse habitats for a variety of wildlife species. (Wildlife)

Management Objective 2: Provide designated basic camping and picnic areas.

Strategy 1: Maintain parking lots and the adjacent grassy areas minimally during the summer. Mow these areas prior to the hunting seasons. (Forestry)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Due to the small size and irregular boundary of the area, trespassing is a common complaint from neighboring landowners.

Management Objective 1: Keep boundary lines adequately posted.

Strategy 1: Monitor and replace boundary signs as they are removed or damaged. (Wildlife)

Lands Proposed for Acquisition:

When available, adjacent land may be considered for acquisition from willing sellers. Tracts that improve area access, provide public use opportunities, contain unique natural communities and/or species of conservation concern, or meet other Department priorities, as identified in the annual Department land acquisition priorities, may be considered.

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

All strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations										
<i>Objective 1</i>										
Strategy 1	X	X								
Strategy 2	X	X								
Strategy 3	X	X								

APPENDICES

Area Background:

Neeper CA contains 227 acres and was named after the nearby small town of Neeper. Historical record gives account that Dr. Samuel Neeper, a captain during the Civil War, moved from Ohio to the area now known as “Neeper” in 1867, thus giving the community its name.

The conservation area is nearly 95 percent timbered, but according to presettlement prairie information, over half of Neeper CA was prairie. The broadest uplands were formerly tallgrass prairie that graded into oak savanna and woodland on the fire-shadowed northern and eastern aspects of steeper lands (Nigh & Schroeder, 2002).

Management of Neeper CA includes timber harvest and limited row crops and food plots. Old fields are managed with prescribed fire, mowing, disking, spraying, and other techniques. Portions of the area are managed for upland wildlife species, such as rabbits and songbirds. Timbered portions are managed for deer, turkey, squirrel, and woodland songbirds in addition to timber products.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	% of Area
Forest/woodland	214.8	95
Old fields	6	2
Cropland	6	2
Ponds	0.2	1
Total	227	100

Public Input Summary:

The draft Neeper Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period June 1–30, 2015. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from four respondents (Appendix A). The Neeper Conservation Area Planning Team carefully reviewed and considered these ideas as they finalized this document. A brief summary of public input themes, including how they were incorporated or why they were not, can be found below. Rather than respond to each individual comment, comments are grouped into general themes and are addressed collectively.

Department responses to themes and issues identified through Neeper Conservation Area public comment period

Suggests allowing horseback riding and adding trailer parking, hitching rails and camping for equestrian riders.

Currently, there are no horseback riding opportunities available on this conservation area. Due to its small size, it would be difficult to develop a trail system, and having trails open to this activity would increase the potential of interference with existing area uses. While the planning team understands a desire by some to develop this activity on the area, there are no plans for adding equestrian trails at this location. The area manager will suggest to users who request this activity to pursue this recreational opportunity on Deer Ridge Conservation Area (20 miles away) and Charlie Heath Memorial Conservation Area (25 miles away) both of which are open seasonally to equestrian use.

Supports acquiring more land to expand the conservation area.

The Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) purchases land from willing sellers. As land in this area becomes available, staff will review its ability to the Department's mission and priorities.

Suggests improving/expanding existing trails.

The areas labeled as Area Access Trails on the area map are available for hiking. Since the area is small and the Area Access Trails cover much of the area, there are no plans to expand the trail system.

Concern that area is too small for firearms deer hunting. Suggests changing area regulations to allow archery hunting only.

It is the desire of the Department to offer a variety of deer hunting opportunities to Missouri hunters. The Department deemed conservation areas and access areas over 40 acres in size and located in rural areas to be safe for firearms deer hunting. Small conservation areas like Neeper, which is 227 acres, allow the area manager to offer less restrictive deer hunting methods without causing a large impact on the local deer herd. Other factors that affect regulations are the surrounding habitat. In the case of Neeper Conservation Area, the surrounding deer habitat is excellent and is interspersed with private cropland. Because it is the Department's desire not to contribute to deer damage on surrounding private croplands, we feel all deer hunting methods should be allowed so local herds do not grow to unacceptably high densities.

Suggests changing area regulations to not allow use of antlerless permits.

Deer regulations on conservation areas are currently being reviewed. It is hoped that within the next year there will be a set of regulations available so that the area manager will be able to

select the regulation that best suits sound management of the deer herd on the area. Deer herd size, deer population trend, amount of hunting pressure, and size of conservation area are a few of the elements that will factor into selecting the deer regulation for the conservation area.

References:

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2009). *Watershed and stream management guidelines for lands and waters managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Nigh, T. A., Schroeder, W. A. (2002) *Atlas of Missouri ecoregions*. Missouri Department of Conservation.

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Land Cover Aerial Map

Figure 3: Easement Aerial Map

Figure 4: Pre-settlement Prairie Aerial Map

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A: Neeper Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

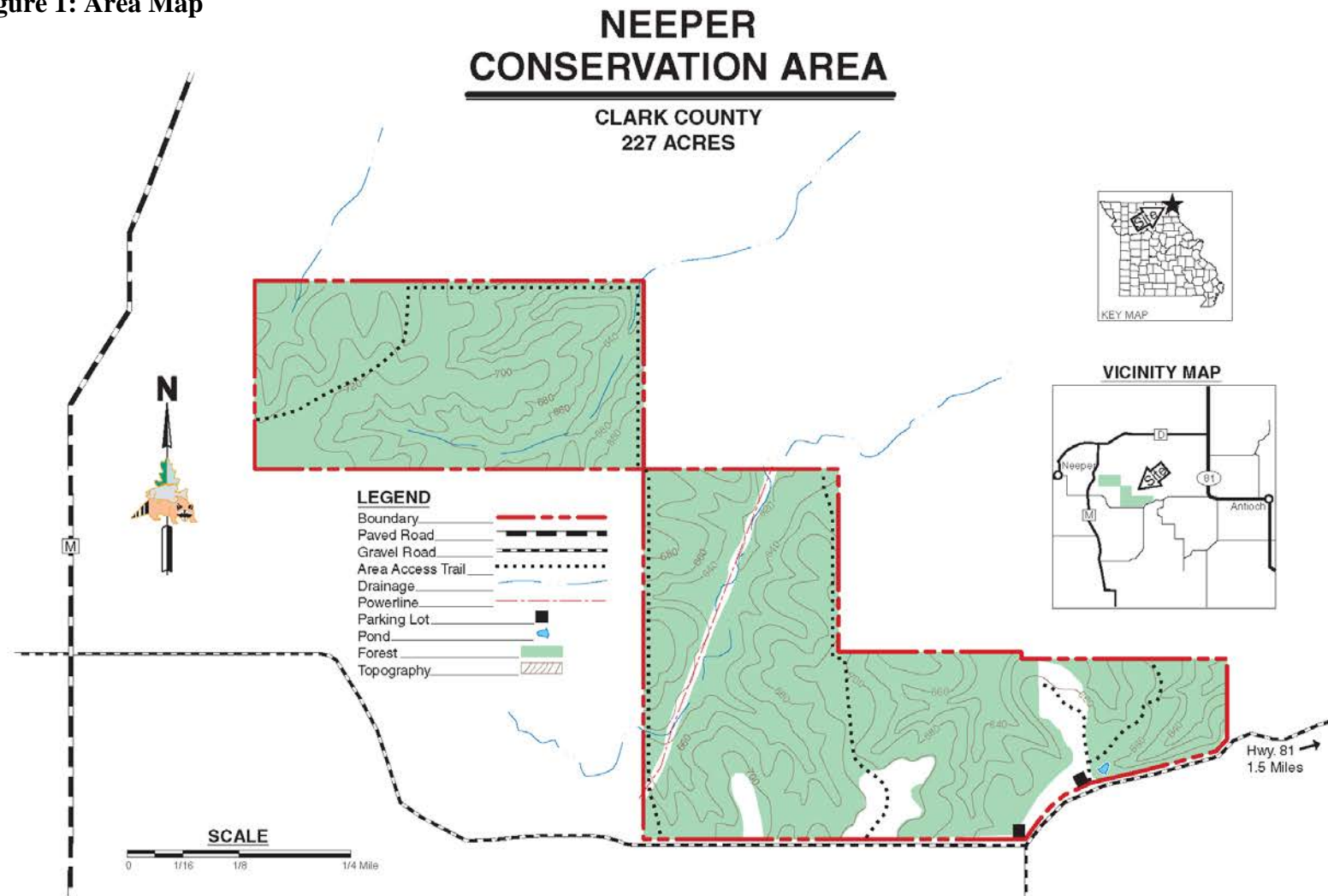


Figure 2: Land Cover Aerial Map

Neeper Landcover 2014

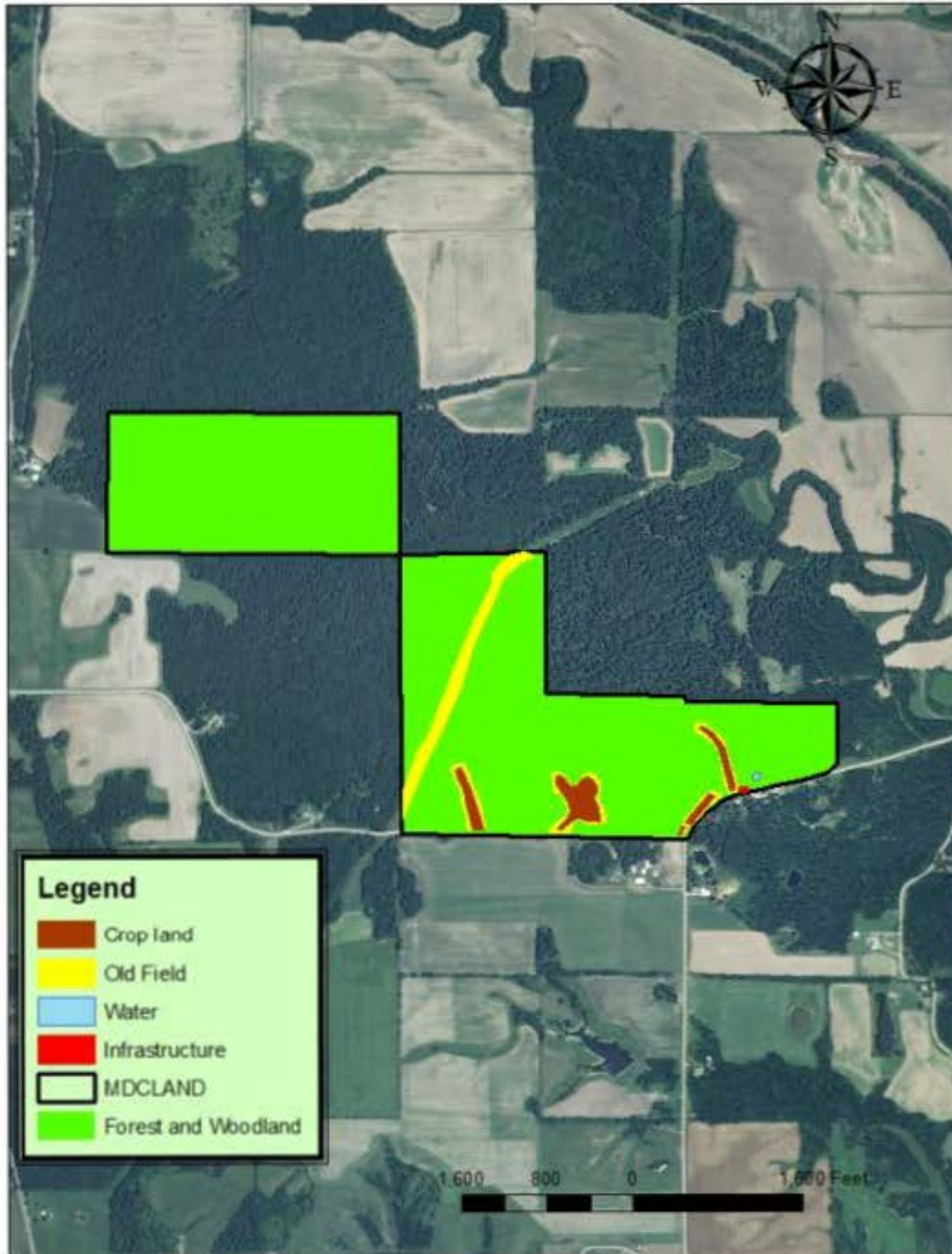


Figure 3: Easement Aerial Map

Neeper Easements 2014

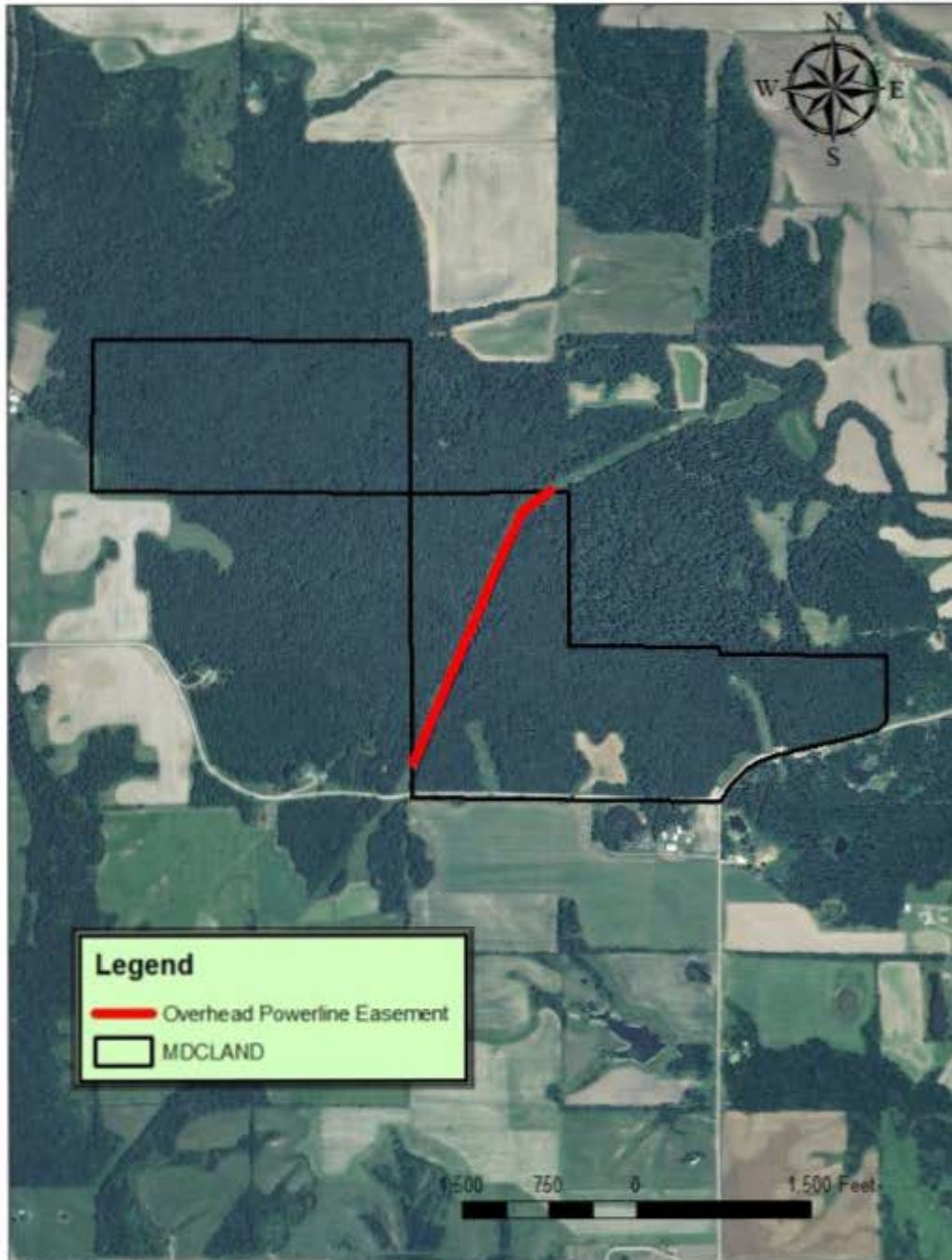
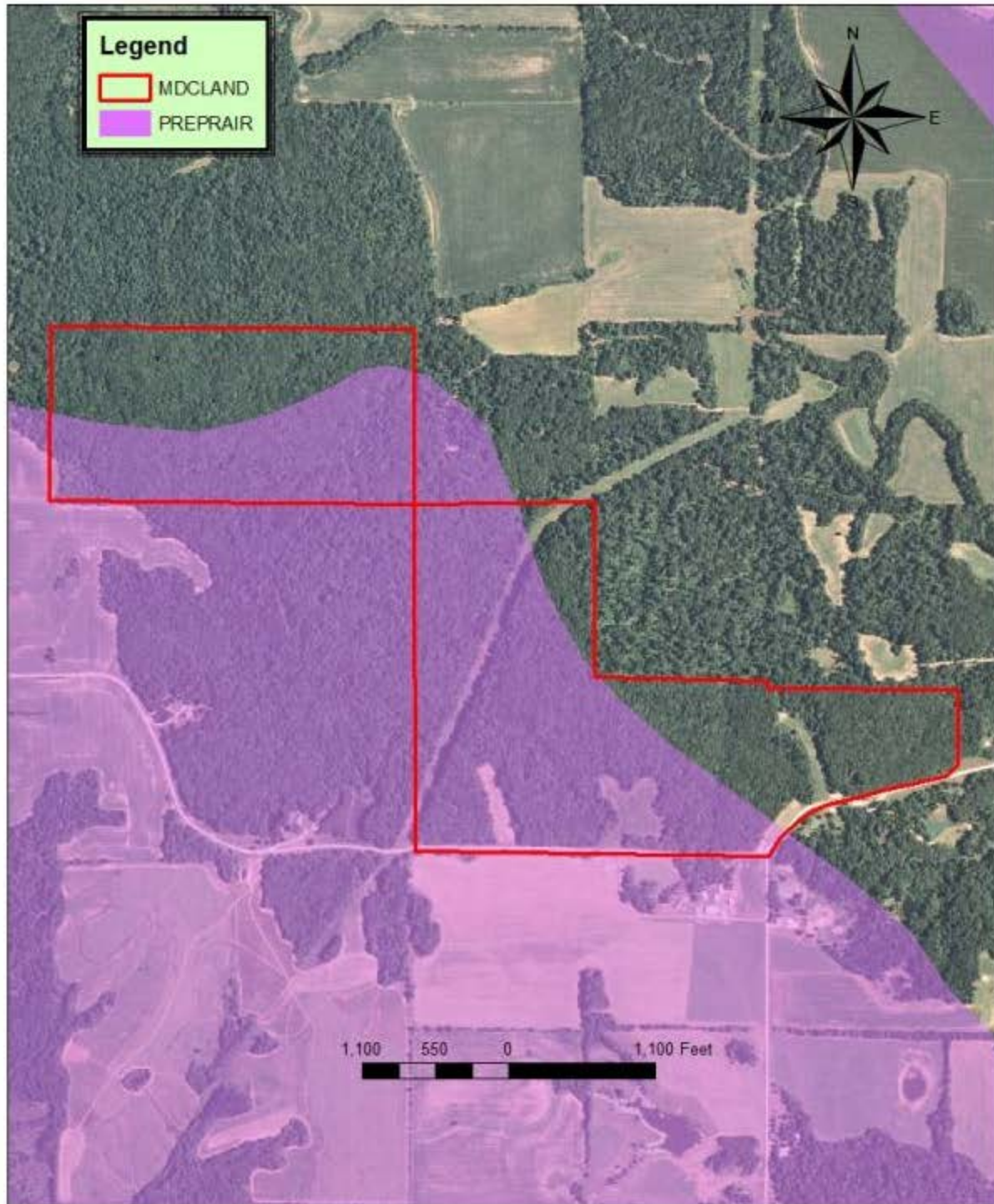


Figure 4: Pre-settlement Prairie Aerial Map

Presettlement Prairie



Appendix A: Neeper Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (June 1-30, 2015):

I would love the plan to include access for equestrians, with appropriate parking for trailers. Hitching rails would be nice, too. And it would be fantastic to have equestrian camping, similar to Iowa's Brushy Creek State Recreation Area. This could be run by concession.
When possible always acquire more land. Continue to improve and enhance the trail.
Hard Copy Comment-I believe this area is too confined for firearms (single projectile) deer hunting.
Hard Copy Comment-I think the area is too small for deer hunting with firearms. It should be archery only or at least during firearms season, bucks only. The population of deer in the area has dwindled.